REVIEW THE DRAFT OF THE NORTHERN FOREST LANDS STUDY REPORT

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORESTS, FAMILY FARMS, AND ENERGY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIRST CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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REVIEW THE DRAFT OF THE NORTHERN FOREST LANDS STUDY REPORT

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1989

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FOREST, FAMILY FARMS, AND ENERGY,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:10 p.m., in room 1302, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Harold L. Volkmer (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Olin, Stallings, Jontz, and Morrison.

Staff present: Francie Monaghan, clerk; Timothy P. De Coster, James A. Davis, and Sondra Feldstein.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. HAROLD L. VOLKMER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MISSOURI

Mr. VOLKMER. The Subcommittee on Forests, Family Farms, and Energy will come to order.

We are meeting today to review the recently issued draft Northern Forest Lands Study. This study was commissioned by a 1989 Appropriation Act, and was conducted by the Forest Service in consultation with the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands.

This report was ordered in response to increasing concerns over the development of the forest lands of New England and New York, and public access to these lands. The study is to identify and assess the timber resources, land ownership patterns, impacts of ownership and management changes over time, and alternative strategies to protect the traditional uses of the land in the four-State region of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and northern New York.

Two critical elements of the study directive are the requirement for public involvement in the development of the study, including State and local governments, landowners, private organizations and the general public, and the caveat that the study "is not intended to lead to administrative action by any agency of the Federal Government, but, rather, to provide Congress and the affected State governments with information for possible future action."

I think it is important that we view this report in that way—not as a final product or the last word on the subject, but as a starting point for further informed discussion of this matter. I am pleased with the amount of public participation that has gone into the development of the study thus far, and would emphasize that the

public is now requested to provide comments on this draft before the report is delivered to Congress. We will certainly be interested, as will the study participants, in reviewing these comments as they are received.

As I noted earlier, this report was developed in consultation with the Governors' task force, which was made up of three appointees from each State. Members should be aware that the testimony received today does not necessarily reflect the opinion of all participants in the study. Each State, and for that matter each task force member, has a different perspective on this resource, and it is important that we continue to understand this as our discussions progress.

A number of people have asked me and my staff where we intend to go from here, what the ultimate conclusion will be. Our response is that there is no predetermined destination. The concern over the future of this resource is valid, but at this point it is fair to say that no one has the one correct answer for dealing with the issue. Continued cooperation and communication among all concerned individuals and entities will be needed to develop a strategy for addressing the many questions we will encounter over the long run.

I want to note that we are unfortunately under some time constraints this afternoon. The committee conferees on legislation affecting the Tongass National Forest will caucus at 2, so our hearing must conclude by that time. We will hold the record open for 2 weeks for additional comments that anyone may wish to submit.

At this time, I yield to the gentleman from the State of Washington.

Mr. MORRISON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a formal statement I would like to submit for the record and say we are pleased with the response to the request for this Northern Forest Lands Study, and I look forward to the results and agree with your statement that we have no preconceived responses to it.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Morrison follows:]

STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE SID MORRISON
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON FOREST, FAMILY FARMS AND ENERGY
REGARDING THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE
DRAFT NORTHERN FOREST STUDY

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to join the Subcommittee today in this oversight hearing of the Forest Service's Northern Forest Study.

As we will recall, in 1988 Congress directed the U.S. Forest Service to study the timberland resources in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine and to review the forest resources - timber, wildlife and fish, lakes and rivers, and recreation; the historical landownership patterns - past, present and future; the likely impacts of change in land and resource ownership, management and use; and possible strategies to protect the long-term integrity and tradional use of the land.

A draft of that study is now completed and I can see by our witness list that we will hear from Forest Service officials and members of the Task Force about the full range of topics of concern in utilizing the forests of the northeast corner of our country.

At issue are 22 million acres of private forest land in the northern forest which are gradually giving way to residential and recreational development. Within the northern forest area is land with access to lakes, rivers and scenic ridges which is most vulnerable to changes in use. The proximity of this land to interstate highways and secondary roads greatly increase the pressures for development.

I am very interested to hear the finding of the Northern Forest Task Force and the Forest Service and welcome today's witnesses. I will be listening to their testimony with keen interest.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. VOLKMER. Thank you.

The gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. OLIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to say how pleased I am that we are having this hearing. I lived for 16 years in Schenectady, New York, which was right below the Adirondack Mountains, and we spent summer after summer with camping trips, canoe trips, and mountain climbing in all the States up there, all the areas listed, and it is going to be just like old home week, hearing about this and reading this report.

Thank you very much.

Mr. VOLKMER. The gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. JONTZ. No comment.

Mr. VOLKMER. All right. With that, our first witness will be Mr. George Leonard, Associate Chief, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

George, welcome back. We are glad to have you with us again.

He is accompanied by Mr. Stephen C. Harper, Coordinator, Northern Forests Lands Study, from Rutland, Vermont.

Before we finish, Mr. Abbott, I understand is present here, why don't you come up and join the rest of them at the table. He is executive director of the New Hampshire Land Conservation Investment Program, from Concord, New Hampshire.

George, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF GEORGE M. LEONARD, ASSOCIATE CHIEF, FOREST SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ACCOMPANIED BY STEPHEN C. HARPER, COORDINATOR, NORTHERN FORESTS LANDS STUDY, RUTLAND, VT

Mr. LEONARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am accompanied today by Mr. Steve Harper. Steve has a long history of work in the New England area. He was our team leader for the development of this report and also a major principal author of the report itself.

I will skip over the part of my testimony that gives the history and the background, since you have just covered that, Mr. Chairman.

As you indicated, the Forest Service was directed to work with the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands in the development of this study, and the report is very much a product of that task force.

The group put a considerable effort into reaching common agreement with the task force on the scope of the issues and the range of possible strategies. We involved the public through meetings and newsletters that introduced the study and later provided updates on our progress.

More than 90 people representing the States, universities, interested groups and landowners participated in working groups and prepared papers to supplement the study.

The northern forest covers roughly 26 million acres across the States of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. It is mostly privately owned. It has a rich history and faces a variety of

impacts. The issues are complex and many people are directly affected by the recent changes in land use.

In carrying out the study, a common vision for the future of the northern forest was developed by the Forest Service, the Governors' task force, and the public to guide the study process and to allow the study team to focus on long-term problems and potential solutions.

Although many who have commented said that the environmental and economic conditions could be improved, most expressed the desire to maintain the northern forest as it exists today, and emphasized the importance of the natural resources to their daily lives.

Current trends, however, are leading to a very different future. Changes in land ownership and use pose a threat to the long-term integrity and traditional uses of the land in parts of the study area. Within the northern forest area, land with access to lakes, rivers and scenic ridges with views is the most vulnerable to subdivision and the resultant changes in use.

Public recreation opportunities, fish, wildlife, biological diversity, water quality and a resource-based economy will decrease if these current real estate trends continue. The largely privately owned forest lands have served the viable forest industry for two centuries, while continuing to provide critical wildlife habitat and important watershed values.

Most of the land has been open to the public for recreation and it is noteworthy that it is within a day's drive of some 70 million people. It is the nearest accessible wildlands for the people of New England.

Identification of the most important land and resources is a crucial step in developing a land conservation program and achieving division. Realizing this, the team developed a set of criteria to identify important resources. Twenty-four strategies grouped into five major categories were developed that could help protect these important resource lands. Each addresses one or several of the factors causing land use to change.

Some strategies would be undertaken by the States, while others would require Federal action. None of the strategies is capable of protecting the entire 26 million acres single-handedly, but used in combination, they could be useful tools to influence the future of the northern forests.

As you know, the Governors' task force and the Forest Service released the draft of the Northern Forest Lands Study on October 17. It is now time to listen to the people who are interested in the northern forest. Their comments will be received until January 19, 1990. After that, we will consider their suggestions, revise our report appropriately and submit it to Congress by the end of March 1990.

Both Steve Harper and I would be pleased to respond to any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Leonard appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. VOLKMER. Does anyone else wish to make a comment before we proceed?

[No response.]

Mr. VOLKMER. I have a few questions. One, I noticed that, in your testimony, you say roughly 26 million acres. Now, is that the area covered by what is presently large tract private owned, or would that be mostly privately owned, even smaller tracts, or is that public?

Mr. HARPER. I will answer that. The map on my left shows the area. The 26 million acres is the entire area. The map shows public and large private ownerships, the green being federally owned lands, the blue being State owned lands, and the various shades of red being private, large private tracts, over 5,000 to 10,000 acres. Of those, about 10,000 acres are owned by industrial concerns that are in the wood products business. Another 3.5 million acres are owned by nonindustrial, families, heirs of families, and they are colored in a lighter orange. And then there is a lot of white area there which is also forested, about 8 million acres, that is owned by private individuals and small corporations, but under 5,000 to 10,000 acres.

Mr. VOLKMER. If I look at that map, what am I looking at to find the 26 million acres?

Am I looking at the whole thing?

Mr. HARPER. No, you are looking at the area that is colored in, in northern and eastern Maine, and then across the northern part in orange——

Mr. VOLKMER. Just the pinkish and orange, or all of it?

Mr. HARPER. The areas that are encompassed by orange, if Olin will put his hands on it, it is the area that goes across——

Mr. OLIN. Is it the area called study boundary, is that the 26 million acres?

Mr. HARPER. Yes.

Mr. VOLKMER. That is some help, then, giving me some idea. Now, of that, how much would be presently, let's say, for sale, what happened in Diamond and others, how much of that is now or, say, with the immediate 4 or 5 years will be available for purchase?

Mr. HARPER. Right at the moment, none of the large industrial tracts that we know of are for sale. There are some smaller tracts, some of the companies and some of the nonindustrial owners have some of their lands for sale. The total number of acres would be extremely difficult to estimate.

What is going to happen next week or next year is unknown, because——

Mr. VOLKMER. All right. Now, in reviewing the synopsis of the study and some of the recommendations in there, it includes such things as Federal tax incentives, capital gains measures for those who retain property as it is presently being used, and then when they sell it to be able to use the capital gains, and other incentives are there.

The way I looked at that report—and you correct me if I am wrong—the way it seems to be progressing is that, on the Federal level, you are basically looking at that type of an incentive type of program, is that correct?

Mr. HARPER. The tax incentives are just part of the strategies and the idea there—and we were trying to be creative and think of things that are not necessarily done now, but the use of tax incentives would be done in exchange for a promise by the landowner

that they would continue to manage the land and not subdivide it and not develop it.

Mr. VOLKMER. I didn't see anything in this preliminary that said anything about the U.S. Government should acquire so many million acres for a national forest or anything like that.

Mr. HARPER. No, we did not include in the report which specific lands the Federal Government should acquire. We do include as a strategy the acquisition of lands by the public, and that could be either the Federal or the State governments.

Mr. VOLKMER. That is part of it, correct?

Mr. HARPER. Yes.

Mr. VOLKMER. So, you are not ignoring that area, but it appears to me that it has no more emphasis than perhaps—in fact, the way I read it, I see more emphasis on trying to leave it in private hands, if it can be managed that way, basically the way it is managed now.

Mr. HARPER. Yes, that's right.

Mr. VOLKMER. And most of this land, as I understand it, even though it is in private ownership, is open to the public usually for, like the gentleman from Virginia mentioned in his period in New England, canoeing, fishing, hunting, recreational activities, is that correct?

Mr. HARPER. Yes, the vast majority of it is open to the public and the public depends on it for recreation, given that, particularly in the New England States, about 95 percent of the land is private land and the public depends on it for recreation.

Mr. VOLKMER. Is the major concern that if nothing is done, eventually that much of the land will be purchased by speculators and subdividers who are providing homes for some people adjoining some of these lakes and streams, et cetera, from the metropolitan area, 70 million people?

Mr. HARPER. The concern is that the nicer places, from a public standpoint, will be subdivided and developed, but probably not the majority of the acres, but the waterfronts or the lands accessible to lakes, river corridors, the scenic ridges, the highway corridors, those are the lands that are very vulnerable to development. And while a majority of the land may stay in forest management, the character of the land and the recreation and the wildlife habitats would be severely impacted.

Mr. VOLKMER. My time has expired. I will recognize the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. MORRISON. Mr. Abbott, I notice that you represent a land conservation investment program, which sounds intriguing. I immediately put 70 million people together with 26 million acres and say, gee, if it's important enough, let's start on a program to buy it. Of course, usually people come to Congress and want us to buy it and we are not doing very well in that category these days. I wondered, is your organization set up precisely for that purpose?

REMARKS OF WILL ABBOTT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEW HAMPSHIRE LAND CONSERVATION INVESTMENT PROGRAM

Mr. ABBOTT. Yes, sir. In fact, one of the things that New Hampshire is doing, and I believe Maine and Vermont and New York are

each doing something similar, is to promote the protection of land conservation value with State funds. New York I think has committed over half a billion dollars to this. We in New Hampshire have committed $40 million. I believe Vermont is just about to put in $25 or $30 million. And this is at the State level solely.

One of the things that is happening with this money is that, rather than buy the land for the purpose of State ownership, State parks and State forests, we are buying interests in the land. Instead of buying the whole bag of sticks and the ownership rights, we are buying two of the sticks out of the five or six that perhaps might be available, and it is cheaper, both from an acquisition standpoint, it affords the kind of protection that the public has an interest in, that is, it keeps the land in its current use and it keeps it accessible to the public, and the other thing about it, from the State standpoint that is so attractive, is that we don't have large annual operating costs and management costs. The private landowner retains the ownership, the base fee ownership of the land, the State buys a part of that ownership, the development rights or what have you, and the consequence is that we have sought and gotten the public protection that we are after, but not at the expense that comes with fee ownership and annualized operational costs, and it is a big, big bonus.

Mr. MORRISON. George Leonard, this reminds me I think of an earlier meeting right in this very same room, where the Forest Service was involved in an action that was not totally concurred in by Members of Congress, as I recall, in which you had participated—I think it is in the northeastern part of the United States, in exactly the same area.

Mr. LEONARD. The same area of interest, and in that case we use a combination, certain lands that were within the boundaries of the national forest were purchased in fee, and other lands that were outside the boundaries of the national forests, we participated with the State in helping them obtain ownership of that land, but with the Federal Government in that case buying the development rights, so it was again another kind of varying kinds of strategies that have been identified here.

Mr. MORRISON. I personally thought that was the best use of the funds that you had and I disagreed with those that thought that was launching off in a direction that is not advisable. I agree, Mr. Abbott, I think the approach you are taking makes all kinds of sense, because the alternatives are either private ownership, do your thing and take your chances, and the other extreme is somehow the Federal Government or State governments purchasing that property, so I would commend you for the middle ground that you have taken, I think achieving everyone's goals at lesser expense.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to be interested in spending more time with this report and, as you have indicated, this report now goes to the public for their response. While I have read your five areas of proposed action, I am sure the people who live in the area have an attachment to this beautiful part of the country, as Mr. Olin does, and will have some very strong feelings on what should be done.

I would just share, Mr. Chairman, that some of the work of this subcommittee has revolved around tax incentives for the entire

Nation that would probably encourage some folks to keep this land in production, and we are looking very carefully in our area at providing special tax incentives, if the land is perpetually kept in wood production and is made available to the public for recreational purposes.

I think there are a number of tools to work with and we will be most interested in how you deal with this, because I think your forests and the volume of people that use them for a variety of purposes will one day maybe a couple of centuries from now be like our forests in the Northwest, where we may face exactly the same decisions.

Thank you.

Mr. VOLKMER. Thank you.

The gentlemen from Virginia.

Mr. OLIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My first reaction is that I was interested that your conclusions are not directed primarily at public purchase, and I am sure that the people in that area don't have much interest in the Federal Government taking over much of that land. There is very little Federal land I think in that area, but there is a lot of interest by the States, I suppose the Adirondack area is a principal one, where the State has seen fit to acquire a fair amount of land and it is largely interspersed with private land, and then all of the land is used really for recreational purposes, a large share of it for profit, and it has worked out very well.

You made the point, though, that in a large part of this area some of the major attractions, such as the lakefront and views from certain mountain areas and so on, I guess, as you put it, might be threatened or have a chance of being threatened. Are you calling there for State action, principally, to try to find some scheme to protect those areas, either through what Mr. Abbott was talking about, with some kind of an agreement where the land stayed private, or how is it that you visualize that that threat could be mitigated? Maybe Mr. Abbott or George could talk about that.

Mr. LEONARD. Well, the thrust of the report is not to say that one strategy is better than another.

Mr. OLIN. Yes.

Mr. LEONARD. Ultimately, I think when the report is done, the Congress is going to have to decide what combination of strategies, but certainly from my understanding of the thing—and Steve may want to comment further—the interest of the people in that area is not to change the status of the land, it is to maintain the status of the land, and so I think there is a certain bias toward keeping it in private ownership, as long as they can do that and minimize the risk that a change in that ownership pattern will end up with development of those particularly vulnerable areas.

But certainly the report was not intended to define the choice of those strategies and say one is a higher priority than the other at this point. It may be that, after public input, that the appropriate strategies will begin to prioritize themselves.

Mr. HARPER. I would like to add to the comment. Those special lands are vulnerable, and I didn't mean to soften that, but there is a real desire on the part of many people and I think of the Governors' task force—and Will can comment on this—that perhaps the

best program is a comprehensive one, where the States and the Federal Government and the private sector all work together, and no one organization is going to be able to solve the problem. If we can figure out ways of having better partnerships, where we share the burdens, we would be most effective.

Mr. OLIN. Mr. Abbott, do you have any other comments along these lines?

Mr. ABBOTT. I didn't mean to suggest, when I was explaining earlier, that acquisition and interest in land or fee interest in land was the only thing that the States were interested in. One of the nice things about this particular study, as the chairman and Mr. Leonard pointed out, is that the States were active participants with Mr. Harper and the Forest Service, and I think that sends a very good message back to those of us at the State level that the Federal Government is interested in exploring new ways to address problems which may be unique to New England and the northeastern U.S.

A lot of us have this thinking that the Federal Government, when it talks about land protection and land acquisition, is thinking in the western mode, where the Federal Government owns a lot of land and its whole approach toward this enterprise is from a different perspective than it would be up in the northeastern U.S.

I think that the States, especially the people who participated from each of the four States in this study, came to grips over the last year, in rather long and vivid and sometimes loud, but not frequently loud, discussions and disagreements, and we had a lot of them. We came to the conclusion that there are some common interests, and even if we can't regulate one another's land use, we can sit down and talk about regulating our own land use. And even though we can't and don't mix funds to protect land along joint borders, maybe we ought to think about doing that.

In New Hampshire, we have a classic case right now up in the northern part of the State where there is a lake, Lake Umbagog, which half of the shoreline is in Maine and half is in New Hampshire. The logical thing to do is for the two States to get together and find a way to protect that frontage around the whole lake, and we are doing that and part of the reason we are doing it is because of this study.

I think I can speak for the other three States in saying that we hope that one of the things we might accomplish in the long term, with this report as a base, is developing that same kind of partnership with the Federal Government.

Mr. OLIN. Well, I think the study and the interest that you obviously were able to generate in the people of that area is very, very encouraging. That area represents a very good example of where the public interest and the private interests are not very far apart, and the owners of private land have sought to preserve the values that they recognize in the first place, because it is essential for them to carry on their tourism business and recreation business. You can't destroy the values and have any business left, so their incentive is just what you would hope.

I am going to be really interested in looking at this, particularly the type of comments you get from the public, will be most interesting, and this could not only serve that area finally, as a guiding

document, but I think it might provide some good ideas for what might be looked at elsewhere in the Nation.

I think one of our obligations is to look after the total forest situation in the Nation, as well as the part the Federal Government owns, and here is an excellent example of looking at part of it where there really isn't much better land at all, but there is a large Federal interest, in terms of the long-term values for the Nation.

I certainly thank you for the work you have done so far, for the report and the rest of it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. VOLKMER. The gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. JONTZ. I do not have any questions.

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Abbott and Mr. Harper, the gentleman from Virginia mentioned what actions that the State and local governments could do in the future. I am just curious what they are doing now.

First, let me ask you this. I don't even know if your State permits land-use planning, setbacks, say, from lakesides, say, you can't build any type of structure within 600 feet of the high watermark on a lake or anything like that. Do you all have anything like that?

Mr. HARPER. Yes, each of the States is moving ahead with land-use planning, and perhaps the earliest two places are in the Adirondack Park, which goes back 15 or 20 years, and then in the unincorporated portions of Maine, where they have the Land-Use Regulation Commission that regulates land use there.

In the past few years, the States of Vermont and Maine have passed land-use planning laws and are implementing a planning process throughout the States. In New Hampshire, the State has a permissive planning process for the individual towns, but then the unincorporated portions of northern New Hampshire has a mandatory planning process that is under way now.

So, I think from the standpoint of planning and regulation, the States have taken some big steps in the last few years, and that is a key part of land conservation.

Mr. VOLKMER. OK. Now, is there any trend up there at the present time as to reducing or a reduction in public access to some of these private lands?

Mr. HARPER. There are some trends to reduce the public access, particularly in New York, but a little bit in the other States as well. There is some exclusive leasing of private lands to hunting clubs, where the owner just basically turns the land over to these groups and the clubs can post it and fence it and patrol it and all of that sort of thing, and keep the public out.

There is a strong tradition, in Maine, especially, not to do that, and yet some of that is going on.

The other thing is that land is subdivided and, whereas, a 1,000 or 10,000 acre tract had been open to the public, once it is divided up into, say, 40-acre lots or something like that, many of those individual owners then post the land, because they want their little piece private, so it is going in that directly, slowly but surely.

Mr. VOLKMER. But you are not seeing the change, say, in the industrial landowners or large landowners that historically have per-

mitted recreational use of their lands, you are not seeing any change as such in that use?

Mr. HARPER. A few of those are doing some exclusive leasing. It is not much, but one company has done it recently in Maine. It is more common in the New York State area.

Mr. VOLKMER. New York State. OK.

I have no further questions. Does the gentleman from Washington have any further questions?

Mr. MORRISON. No further questions.

Mr. VOLKMER. The gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. OLIN. No.

Mr. VOLKMER. Do you have anything else?

Mr. JONTZ. No.

Mr. VOLKMER. Thank you very much, Mr. Leonard, Mr. Harper, Mr. Abbott. We appreciate your being here.

Mr. Abbott, maybe I could ask you this question, and if you feel that you could answer, I would appreciate it. From a State's perspective, because you are representing an investment group, looking at this study, what is your view as to the way you see the Federal role in dealing with this issue?

Mr. ABBOTT. Well, as has been said already, I am not sure there is any one action that the States are looking for the Federal Government to respond with right now. I think what we would like to see—and I use the term loosely, the other States can speak for themselves very loudly and clearly—I think all four States would like to see, from the Federal level, a recognition that the way the government goes about the land protection business in the rest of the country is not necessarily the way it will go about it here in the Northeast, No. 1.

No. 2, I think that, as Steve pointed out, if there is a way of packaging a Federal set of policies that can give some incentive to private landowners, that can give some benefits to public users and, at the same time can sustain an economy, like everybody's economy has surges and drops, the people who live up in this part of the woods like the things they do, they like their communities the way they are, and they are a little bit afraid of the future, and we all are.

But they see some enormous changes coming about as a result of changes in land use and land ownership, and that is what our interest is, in seeing the Federal Government respond to that and be a little bit creative in the response, and I think the States are willing to step up to the plate with dollars and with a little bit more collaboration on their part.

Mr. VOLKMER. Thank you very much, Mr. Abbott.

With that, that will conclude the hearing. I thank all of our witnesses for being here, and we look forward to when the comments are in and the finished report and then we can come back and talk about it some more.

Thank you very much. The subcommittee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:45 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned, subject to the call of the Chair.]

[Material submitted for inclusion in the record follows:]

STATEMENT OF
GEORGE M. LEONARD, ASSOCIATE CHIEF
FOREST SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

before the
Subcommittee on Forests, Family Farms, and Energy
Committee on Agriculture
House of Representatives

Concerning the Northern Forest Lands Study

October 26, 1989

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Thank you for the opportunity to report on the development, content, and status of Draft the Northern Forest Lands Study. I am accompanied by Steve Harper, the coordinator of the study team.

In response to growing public concern over large tracts of private forest land being offered for sale in northern New England and New York for possible subdivision and development, Congress included $250,000 in the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriation Act for 1989 (Public Law 100-446) for the Forest Service, in consultation with the Governors' Task Force to identify and assess: (1) the forest resources of the area, including timber and other forest products, fish and wildlife, lakes and rivers, and recreation; (2) historical land ownership patterns and projected future land ownership, management, and use; (3) the likely impacts of the changes in land and resource ownership, management, and use of traditional land use patterns, including economic stability and employment, public use of private lands, natural integrity, and local culture and quality of life; and (4) alternative strategies to protect the long-term integrity and traditional uses of such land. This direction was included in the conference report on the bill.

As stated in the conference report, the study was not intended to lead to administrative action by any Federal agency, but rather to provide Congress and the affected State governments with information for possible future action. Further, the report directed the Forest Service to work with the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands to carry out the study. The conference report also included a statement that the involved States were expected to provide funding in an amount equal to that provided by Congress to the Forest Service.

We put considerable effort into reaching common agreement with the Task Force on the scope of the issue and the range of possible strategies. We involved the public though meetings and newsletters which introduced the study and later provided an update on our progress. Many national newspapers and magazines have covered the issue and the study. More than 90 people representing the States, universities, interested groups and landowners participated in working groups and prepared papers to supplement the study. An estimated $350,000 worth of assistance was donated by these people.

The Northern Forest covers a large area, roughly 26 million acres. It extends across the States of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. It is mostly privately owned, has a rich history, and faces a variety of impacts. The issues are complex and many people are directly affected by recent changes in land use.

The Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service appreciate the opportunity to participate in this undertaking. We have a long history of working with the four States on a number of forest and rural issues. The Department's Food and Agriculture Councils regularly address rural resource concerns. The Forest Service research labs in the four States focus on issues of concern to the

entire Northeast. Our State and Private Forestry staff have enjoyed excellent working relationships with the State foresters in managing a cooperative program to protect and enhance forest resources in the Northeast. The two National Forests within the study area are an integral part of what makes New England a special place for so many people. We view this study as an extension of the close working relationship we have with our neighbors in protecting and managing the forest resources of the area.

A common vision for the future of the Northern Forest was developed by the Forest Service, the Governors' Task Force, and the public to guide the study process and to allow the study team to focus on long-term problems and potential solutions. Although many who commented said that environmental and economic conditions could be improved, most expressed a desire to maintain the Northern Forest as it exists today and emphasized the importance of natural resources to their daily lives.

Current trends, however, are leading to a very different future. Changes in landownership and use pose a threat to the long-term integrity and traditional uses of the land in parts of the study area. Within the Northern Forest area, land with access to lakes, rivers, and scenic ridges with views is the most vulnerable to subdivision and the resultant changes in use. Public recreation opportunities, fish and wildlife, biological diversity, water quality, and the resource-based economy would decrease if these current real estate trends continue.

The largely privately-owned forest land has served a viable forest industry for two centuries, while continuing to provide critical wildlife habitat and important watershed values. Mostly open to the public for recreation, it is

within a day's drive of 70 million people. It is the nearest accessible wildland area for the people of New England.

Identification of the most important land and resources is a crucial step in developing a land conservation program and achieving the vision. Realizing this, we developed a set of criteria to identify important resources. This is a first step.

Twenty-four strategies, grouped into five major categories, were developed that could help protect the current land resource base from future development. Each addresses one or several of the factors causing land use to change. Some strategies would be appropriately undertaken by the States, while others would require Federal action. None of the strategies is capable of protecting the entire 26-million-acre region single-handedly, but used in combination they could be very useful tools limiting future development of the Northern Forest.

As you know, the Governor's Task Force and the Forest Service released the draft of the "Northern Forest Land Study Report" on October 17. It is now time to listen to the people who are interested in the Northern Forest; we will receive their comments until January 19, 1990. We will consider their suggestions, revise our report appropriately, and submit it to Congress by the end of March 1990.

I will be pleased to answer your questions.

USDA
Forest Service

Northern Forest Lands Study
P.O. Box 520, Rutland, VT 05702-0520
(802) 773-2133

Caring for the Land and Serving People

October 17, 1989

Dear Friend:

The enclosed draft report summarizes the findings of the USDA, Forest Service and the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands after a year examining changes in land use in the northern forest; especially sales of timberland, subdivision and development. This draft identifies problems facing the region and includes strategies for congress and state legislatures to consider when making policy to affect the region's future.

The draft report was written specifically for public review. A final report will be submitted to congress in January, after the views and recommendations of people across the Northeast have been incorporated into the report. Meetings will be held in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont and Massachusetts to provide a forum for people to express their ideas about the northern forest and the best strategies for the future.

The Forest Service and Governors' Task Force invite people with an interest in the future of the northern forest to attend one of the meetings, listed on the reverse side of this letter, or to send ideas in writing to the lands study at the address above. Comments need to be received before ~~December 31, 1989~~ JAN 19 1990 to be useful in preparing the final report.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Stephen C. Harper

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

NEW YORK

Tuesday, October 24*, 7:00 p.m.
North Country Community College
20 Winona Avenue
SARANAC LAKE

Monday, October 30*, 7:00 p.m.
Public Library
McChesney Room
Clinton and Liberty Streets
SCHENECTADY

Tuesday, October 31*, 5:30 p.m.
Municipal Art Society
457 Madison Avenue
NEW YORK CITY

MAINE

Wednesday, November 15, 7:00 p.m.
Location to be announced
SOUTH PARIS

Thursday, November 16, 1:00 p.m.
Location to be announced
BANGOR

Thursday, November 16, 7:00 p.m.
Location to be announced
GREENVILLE

Tuesday, November 28, at 7:00 p.m.
Location to be announced
PRESQUE ISLE

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Wednesday, November 8, 7:30 p.m.
NH Department of Fish and Game
Central Headquarters
2 Hazen Drive
CONCORD

Thursday, November 9, 7:30 p.m.
Colonel Town Gymnasium
LANCASTER

VERMONT

Thursday, November 9, 7:30 p.m.
Brighton Town Hall
ISLAND POND

Wednesday, November 8, 7:30 p.m.
Lincoln Inn
20 Hastings
ST. JOHNSBURY

Date and location to be announced
BURLINGTON

MASSACHUSETTS

Wednesday, November 1, 5:30 p.m.
Cabot Auditorium
3 Joy Street
BOSTON

For further information contact the Northern Forest Lands Study
P.O. Box 520
Rutland, VT 05702
(802)773-2133

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* Joint meeting with the Governor's Commission on the Adirondacks in the Twenty-First Century.

DRAFT

THE NORTHERN FOREST LANDS STUDY

OF NEW ENGLAND AND NEW YORK

A report to the Congress of the United States
on the recent changes in landownership and land use
in the northern forests of Maine, New Hampshire,
New York and Vermont.

October 5, 1989

Authors: Stephen C. Harper
Laura L. Falk
Edward W. Rankin

Northern Forest Lands Study
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P.O. Box 520
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(802) 773-2133

Prepared in cooperation with the
Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands:

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New Hampshire: Will Abbott, Land Conservation Investment Program
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New York: Robert H. Bathrick, Department of Environmental Conservation
George D. Davis, Davis Associates & Commission on the Adirondacks
Ross S. Whaley, College of Environ. Science and Forestry, SUNY

Vermont: Mollie H. Beattie, Agency of Natural Resources
Peter B. Meyer, E.B. Hyde Corporation
Carl H. Reidel, Environmental Program, University of Vermont

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1988, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service was directed by Congress to study the timberland resources in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine and to identify and assess: (1) forest resources, including timber, fish and wildlife, lakes and rivers, and recreation; (2) historical landownership patterns and projected future landownership, management, and use; (3) the likely impacts of changes in land and resource ownership, management, and use patterns; and (4) alternative strategies to protect the long-term integrity and traditional uses of land.

Congress specifically stated that the study was not intended to lead to administrative action by any federal agency, but rather to provide Congress and the affected state governments with information for possible future action. Further, Congress directed the Forest Service to work with the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands to carry out this study.

A common vision for the future of the 26 million acre northern forest, developed with the Governors' Task Force and the public, set broad goals. Across the Northeast people expressed support for the northern forest the way it is today. The importance of natural resources to daily life was stressed repeatedly, with an emphasis on enhancing the environmental and economic well-being of the region.

Current trends, however, are leading to a very different future. Changes in landownership and use clearly threaten the long-term integrity and traditional uses of the land in parts of the study area. As a result of these changes, open space, forestry, farming and recreational uses of 22 million acres of private land in the northern forest are gradually giving way to residential and recreational development. The underlying causes are the demand for recreational property, escalating land values and economic pressures facing the region's forest landowners. In areas where the market value of land for development is many times greater than its value for growing timber, it is unlikely that traditional land uses will continue.

Within the northern forest area, land with access to lakes, rivers, and scenic ridges with views is the most vulnerable to changes in use. Proximity to interstate highways and secondary roads greatly affects the vulnerability of land to development.

Today noticeable changes are concentrated in specific locations scattered across the four states, but the long-term impacts of change will reach throughout the northern forest. Public recreation opportunities, fish and wildlife, biological diversity, water quality, and the resource-based economy and quality of life are all at risk if trends are allowed to continue.

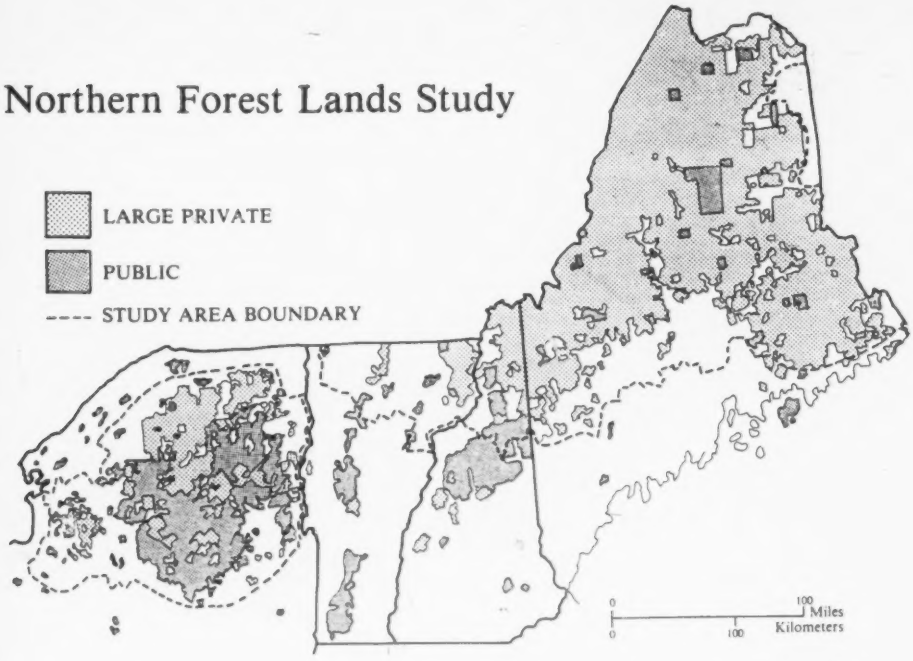
Identification of the most important land and resources is a crucial step in developing a program to protect the integrity of the region. The Governors' Task Force and Forest Service defined a set of criteria to identify important resources and to set priorities and guide conservation efforts in the region.

A variety of strategies was developed to protect the land with important resources. Each of the twenty-four strategies addresses one or several of the factors causing land use to change. None of the strategies is capable of protecting the entire region single-handedly, but used in combination they are powerful tools to influence the future of the northern forest.

Natural resources and opportunities for public recreation in the northern forest are of national significance. The states should work together with the federal government to develop a regional solution to the changes in land use that threaten the northern forest. The solution should incorporate programs to protect the natural resources and to address the economic and social needs of communities in the region. Traditional solutions will not meet the challenge of long-term protection for the integrity and traditional uses of the Northeast's last remaining expanse of wildland. The challenge requires innovative solutions and a willingness to explore different ways of thinking.

If a regional solution is to be developed the affected states, the Governors' Task Force and the federal government should all contribute. Working together, the states should establish boundaries for the area where strategies would be used, and map land with important resources. The Governors Task Force should develop a plan for coordinated regional land conservation, and continue to facilitate communication between the states. The federal government can contribute to the efforts of the states and Governors' Task Force by providing staff, assistance for mapping, other technical assistance and funds.

The work of the Northern Forest Lands Study and Governors' Task Force has laid a foundation of interstate communication and cooperation. Recognizing that the threats facing the northern forest cross state boundaries, the four states are expressing a desire to work together as a region, with assistance from the federal government, to explore a common solution.



Land Ownership in the Study Area (Thousands of Acres)					
	Maine	New Hampshire	New York	Vermont	Total
PRIVATE LAND					
Industrial	7,700	500	1,200	300	9,700
Large Non-Industrial	3,100	50	500	50	3,600
Other Private	3,400	350	3,100	1,550	8,400
Total Private Land	14,200	900	4,800	1,900	21,800
PUBLIC LAND					
State	700	50	2,800	90	3,700
Federal	80	200	0	6	300
Total Public Land	800	300	2,800	100	4,000
TOTAL AREA	15,000	1,200	7,600	2,000	25,800

(The complete report is held in the committee files.)